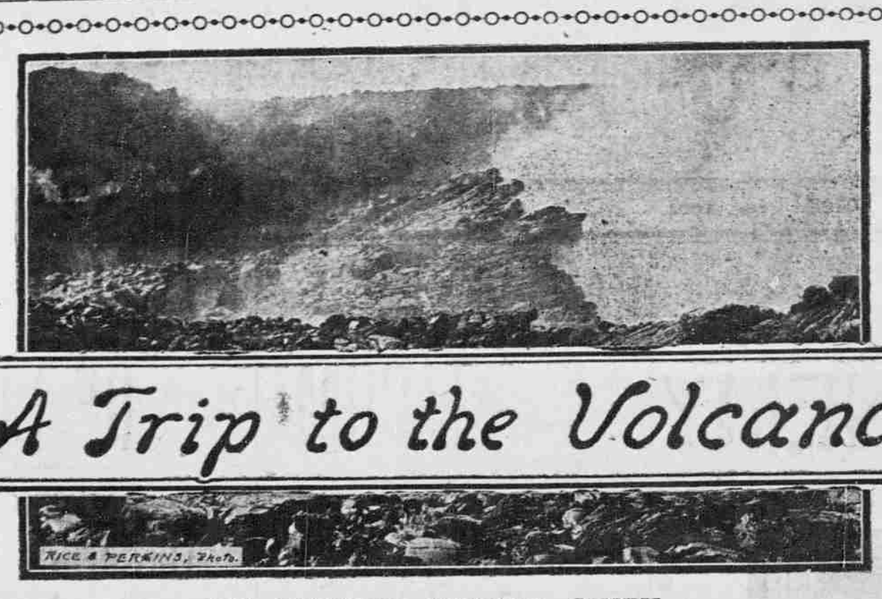

A Trip to the Volcano.

RICE & PERKINS, Photo.

BY WALTER GIFFORD SMITH.

THE ways of travel between Honolulu and the volcano of Kilauea, have been slowly but steadily improving for thirty years. Time was when they were comprised in a cruise to Hilo by sailboat and in deck passage from there on a mule over a mountain trail, the latter thirty-one miles long and the journey ending at the door of a shed. After a while a rolling and tumbling steamcoaster connected at Hilo with a stage which carried the passenger up a fair road to a comfortable inn. Now the spick and span Kinau with bilge keels to keep her from that corkscrew motion which made a traveller feel as if he were in a state of spiral fermentation, steams nimbly on her course, carrying people right side up and landing them in Hilo in one day or less. A train takes the sightseer through plantation and jungle to a point twelve miles from the volcano from which a stage runs to as neat and comfortable and well-managed a hotel as one could hope to find in any isolated rural district. The road there, though rough underfoot, leads through the most delightful vistas of tropical forest; past giant ferns, wild bananas, strange trees covered with parasite vines, banks of wild roses, bushes laden with new and delicious small fruits, all the growths in a tangle and, in the upper levels, inhabited by red birds. As one climbs upward the air freshens and attains the tonic zest which belongs to an elevation of from 3000 to 4000 feet.

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It is worth the price of a trip to Hawaii on the Kinau, if the skies are clear, to see the beautiful north shore of the big island. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote of the "Arid coast of Oahu" and arid enough it looks as one approaches it by sea. But the north—or northeastern—shore of Hawaii gives no such impression. From Upolu Point to Hilo the land, for the most part, looks like the Garden of the Lord. Vast plantations, clad in the incomparable green of growing cane lie nearest the bold shores and above and beyond these are spacious forests. On the horizon rises, to a snowy bastion above the clouds, the extinct volcano of Mauna Kea, with the gigantic shape of Mauna Loa, the active volcano, keeping it company. Kohala, the first district you see in the cultivated area terminates on the flanks of that dark, gloomy and impressive mountain uplift, beginning with palisades that breast the sea, where the inexhaustible Kohala water-supply is stored. The shore measurement of this primeval solitude is said to be about twelve miles. It is a place of abysmal forests and of rapid streams which go plunging into the sea at intervals of a few hundred yards. Sometimes the water launches itself over a high cliff; again it gushes out midway down the face of the rock; anon it races through a canyon to a lower fall. Millions of gallons of fresh water are wasted there every minute—enough to irrigate the whole territory if it could be held and distributed.

Beyond this forest and mountain preserve, the Hamakua district presents another vista of green plantations and upper woodlands, with new-angle glimpses of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. Landings for big sugar mills are here and there and one sees cane-bundles and bags of sugar travelling by gravity down lines of wire from the high ground or the mill as the case may be—merchandise which seems to fly along on its own wings, now casting its shadow upon waving fields, now upon sunlit gorges, then upon plowed ground. One never tires of looking at the bright country and it reminds one of a perfect Eastern landscape in the month of June. The green is that of young meadow-grass; the homes have that Eastern air of settled comfort and family tradition; the far, indeterminate forests might be of elm and maple for all one could tell. The alien note is struck, however, by occasional groups of palms or the remains of some ancient heathen temple, and most of all by the brilliant tropical sea, the sea of shimmering blue where the flying-fish flash and the porpoises play, the sea unvexed by thunder storms or sudden gales, fanned by soft breezes and one which softly piles its milky surges on the shore.

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Hilo! For insomnia take Hilo. As a cure for wakefulness it is equal to a life-membership in the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce. I watched the stores slowly open late one morning as if the owners had gone, like the galley-slaves, unwillingly to their tasks. The ice which, in some occult way had found a man to deliver it early, lay on the sidewalk melting at the rate of a cent a pound. A horse stood in the street awhile and then fell down, while I waited to see if he would curl up and purr himself to sleep. (It was in Hilo where Ross Browne made his famous remark that he never saw but one Hawaiian doing anything and he was falling off a house.) Along about 11 a. m. I entered a store on the main street to make a small purchase and was reminded of the man who went into an Arkansaw grocery for a quart of molasses. The Arkansaw merchant got up slowly and then sat down, shaved off a chew of tobacco and droned out, "Say ain't there no other place in this yer town where you can get those molasses?" Even the Chinamen who have brought the blight of Asia to Hilo's principal street are drowsy and so must be the mosquitoes, for I didn't see but one and he was so tired he could hardly present his bill. In a restaurant I had to stand and ring a bell to get anyone to come and be paid. There is no hotel in Hilo; enterprise is so dead that they leave the entertainment of strangers to a lodging house and cafe. There isn't a horse-car in the place and the hacks I saw had not yet acquired rubber tires. The telephones are those ancient things you turn with a crank. But for sleep Hilo beats Ephesus or the place where Rip Van Winkle met the dwarfs. Except for the movement about the Volcano Stables, which is the one Hilo place where something is doing, you don't hear a sound to disturb you from 9 p. m. to about 8:30 a. m. except the soft boom of the surf, the cries of distant seabirds and the jingle of gold twenties as Admiral Beckley counts his money. Hilo, in fact, is a shady and tolerant Rest Cure. You can, in fact, get rid of all the bad effects of the Hurly Burly by a stay of twenty-four hours. They don't even kick there any more; it's too much like work.

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Somebody told me that a Hilo man wrote to Claus Spreckels suggesting that if he would repair his hotel building there it could be opened to the public. The reply was: "I wont do a thing. I hope to live long enough to see Hilo a rotting pile of lumber."

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Mauna Loa is a titanic mass of soft honey-combed rock, with deep galleries and bubble-chambers, fathomless sinks, crooked chimneys, cracks and fumeroles, as full of airholes as a sponge and containing in its depths a fiend's laboratory where molten granite is mixed with brimstone. When an earthquake shakes the island you may hear sounds in the abysses of the mountain as if a gale was rushing about through "caverns measureless to man." Then when too much molten rock has been stored up it rises and, following the line of least resistance, comes out—perhaps from the top or sides of the mountain, perhaps from the fearsome pit of Kilauea, perhaps from your back yard. By certain signs you generally know when an eruption is due and are at liberty to guess all round the mountain as to where it will appear. Invariably during the past century white people have been lucky enough to get out of the way.

The scenic point for tourists is Kilauea, on the far outer rim of which is the hotel. Standing on the front portico of this pleasant hostelry you look down over the tops of small, red-aigretted trees, to a black arena such as Satan might employ for the Saturday afternoon field sports of a hundred thousand devils. This arena is paved with twisted lava, on which may be seen, especially when the air is cold, jets and puffs of steam. Away off in the center is the Pit from which sulphuretted clouds are almost ever rising; and about the vast outer circle are precipitous cliffs from four to six hundred feet high, destitute of vegetation and showing steam for a space back of their brinks, but not usually from their steep sides. It is precisely such a place as Dante saw and as Dore pictured; and one may easily understand, after looking down the awful well of Kilauea how the early theologians got their physical idea of a place of everlasting torment. There is the brimstone lake, the bottomless pit, the fire that never dies and all the other accessories save the gentlemen with horns and hoofs. Momentarily you expect them to emerge and look about for lots of people you know.

There you stand on the edge of an abyss that goes straight down for over a thousand feet to a hot floor of which you have glimpses through the whirling vapor—a floor covered with small hillocks, each with a tiny crater of its own which may, at any moment, pour out a stream of liquid rock. You are poised on a ledge of cracked lava—cracked in a semi-circle about you, and ready, it would seem, to fall in and carry you along. Perhaps the cliff below is undermined, at any rate, far in the depths you hear landslides and draw back in affright. Nobody ever gets hurt there but everybody wonders why.

People go from the Volcano House to a point near the crater on horseback. The wiry little nags they ride are put in a lava stone corral and the rest of the trip is made on foot. Before reaching the brink you come to a hot spot where the elemental flame is so near the surface that you can actually cook a meal. While you are resting on that handy bench rock an asbestos cushion might come in well. Further along is a hole in the cold lava, opening by ladder into a bubble chamber which the visitor is expected to climb down into and explore. Candle in hand you go through that place and into various dark passages where little nubbins of stalactites may be picked from the roof. On the surface are various curios, a hot sink known as the Devil's Kitchen, and a miniature volcano which one of the Dickey brothers, years ago, named the Little Beggar. An eruption was on in the main pit then and a sideshow volcano about sixteen feet high cropped up on the lava plain, much to the disgust of an English tourist who found, as he said, "the nawsty little beggar spitting in my pawth." When Dickey heard that he baptized the impudent volcanic stranger with the name it yet bears.

Nobody should leave Hawaii without a visit to Kilauea. Charles Nordhoff, who was widely travelled, once said: "Kilauea is one of the seven wonders of the world. The others are the Pyramids, Niagara, Yosemite, the Yellowstone, the Taj Mahal and the view from Mont Blanc." And Charles Nordhoff knew what he was talking about.

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One learns to his surprise that the Volcano is owned by the Bishop Estate and leased to the Volcano House Company for $750 a year. What is more the company is bound by contract not to remove the volcano or any part of it. What fumes escape cannot be accounted for; but woe to the man who takes away that lava or those beetling cliffs or packs up the Little Beggar. The Little Beggar has cooled off into an asset and is probably set down for a sum equal to a prince's ransom in the great ledger wherein the Bishop Estate records the ownership of so vast a part of the soil and lava of Hawaii-nei.

One loves the Bishop Estate because it is a standing refutation of the libel that the missionaries got all the land. Count up what the old kings took and which came down to their posterity, Mrs. Bishop among the rest, add what the kings put aside for the support of the crown and there was a bare third left for the common people, and a pretty poor third at that. The kings took the best as kings do. Of the 750 people of missionary extraction in these islands I dare say that their land-holdings could be hidden in one corner of the Bishop Estate; and of these I don't believe there was an acre acquired dishonestly. If there was, the anti-missionaries have not yet put their fingers on it.

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The May climate at the Volcano struck me as being like that of San Francisco in summer without the "hollow changeless breeze." The skies are often sullen, the days are never warm as under a sympathetic sun and at night one needs heavy blankets. Occasionally the clouds touch the earth and produce the effect of fog. As in San Francisco there is a stimulant in the air and the new-comer from the heat of Hilo instinctively draws long breaths and fills his lungs. Whether due more to climate or appetite I am not sure, but vegetables and other food seem to taste better at the Volcano House than they do down on the lowlands anywhere. Crisp air is needed for other growths beside celery and they say it makes potatoes, cabbages and especially turnips of better flavor. As for appetite the more cold the more hunger and the more need of stimulating food. The Volcano House has a plain, wholesome and appetizing menu, three times a day. And there is abundance on the table.

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The comforts of the Volcano House are simple and genuine; the discomforts few if any. Of things that vex the spirit down by the sea one meets none—no heat, no mosquitoes, no cockroaches, no wilted vegetables, no cold-storage food. To be sure the Nature Man happens in but as he doesn't stay long the affliction can be borne. Climatically and almost every other way one revels in contrasts at the Volcano House. There are cool days and crisp evenings—times when you can see your breath; there is a vigorous appetite all the while; and it is fed on good things that taste as they do back East. Then one may be careless and comfortable in dress, for Host and Hostess Bidgood are no more austere in sartorial rules than hospitable farmers would be. You may clothe yourself in your easiest garments and then "loaf and invite your soul." You may get up from the fern nook where you have been making your peace with nature and go to dinner without running the gauntlet of poised lorgnettes. There is solid comfort in the great rude, whitewashed sitting room with its blazing fireplace, its easy, old-time rocking chairs and sofas, its billiard table and record books. People desert the stiff parlor and gather in the big room where they read, smoke, pop corn, make molasses candy and play pedro. There is not a single glint of style about that room. It is as unconventional as the inside of a log house. But warmth and cheer and the air of peace are ever there and the worried mortal straightens out his nerves and the selfish one grows sympathetic. The whitewashed room is full of memories too; it used to be all there was of the hotel and many a king, queen, prince, admiral, statesman, scholar and literateur has been solaced there. Some of them left their autographs to prove it—but these have been mostly cut from the book.

Aside from the big room is a spacious porch with a conservatory-lanai at the end; a goodly parlor dining room and office; a sequestered bar and, up stairs, clean, well-aired rooms with good beds. Outside is a steam sulphur bath with a cold shower—a bath supplied with vapor from the vent holes near-by which Kilauea, distant three miles, uses for exhaust pipes. These vents are useful in other ways for the servants about the place heat water in such of them as are located close to the back door. One of the smaller fumeroles is beside the path leading from the hotel to the pig-pen and it is a curiosity in its way. You can hardly see the vapor from it until a match is lit and then it rolls out in white clouds.

Outside you find—what? Golf links? Not a link! Race-courses? Not a race-course? Lovers' Leaps? Not a leap? Latticed arbors? Not an arbor—and the city man thanks fortune for that. But he will find the most delightful walks and bridle paths; horses to gallop on; views that photograph themselves upon the mind forever; oxygen like champagne; the flowers that grew in those home door-yards of New England and some that tell of good old California; and off back of the hotel the simple, delightful and profitable occupations of the farm. For small farming in its most intimate phases is a success at the Volcano House and the way vegetables and garden fruits grow and poultry and pigs thrive and cows yield cream would bring a smile of content to any man with the soul of a New Englander. Wild berries are about, the sacred ohelo, a luscious red raspberry and abnormal growths not good to eat—raspberries as big as English walnuts.

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The sightseer at the Volcano House too often contents himself with a visit to the crater and to Kilauea-iki, and with the creature comforts which Host Bidgood knows so well how to provide. But there are other things worth while which one finds at the end of pleasant drives, a stately fern forest, for instance, a place of picnic glens and the twitter of strange birds. Further along is a koa grove, gnarled and twisted and almost prostrate, looking like the nightmare forest which Dore's pencil drew across the darkling text of Dante. Close by one finds what is left of a gigantic koa grove of antiquity—trees from three to eight feet in diameter. These relics are moulds in solid lavas; deep holes, their sides marked with bark lines and twisted places where the branches thrust themselves through the molten flood which suddenly overwhelmed them. Here was a deep gulch into which lava poured like a flood, encasing the trees and suddenly cooling as lava does—cooling so quickly that the bark of the trees was not burned off but held together to leave its autograph in the strange matrix. Looking down into the earth, ten, twelve, twenty feet and more, one sees the mould of a tree which may have been green and leafy when the cradle of Moses rocked in the river among the reeds, or when from the depths of Mount Sinai ascended the lava fires which the Israelites, in their superstitious terror, confounded with the presence of Jehovah.

Unfortunately the owner or lessee of the tree-mould park is filling up the holes to keep his pigs and calves from falling into them.

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The old record books of the Volcano House are mutilated, perhaps robbed of their best, but enough remains to tempt the leisure of a rainy afternoon. They have been kept since 1865 and contain the names and sentiments of guests who cared to leave such mementos behind. One hears that there were record books away back in the thirties and forties, but no one knows what became of them. Towards the present series, the furtive searcher for autographs, pen-knife in hand, has been feloniously attracted; and one finds square holes in leaves from which a famous name has been cut and besides, whole leaves are missing which contained, not only famous names perhaps, but the drawings and water-color sketches of true artists. The contribution of Mark Twain was long ago pilfered; but before it went it had been copied and a copy now appears in the book, one which the author himself has verified.

Speaking of Mark Twain, the record book for 1866 contains his Hawaiian letters to the Sacramento Union, the ones he afterwards revised for "Roughing It." The original text of comments which were afterwards put into the familiar book appears there, including a short chapter on the late Chief Justice Harris for whom the writer had a scowling aversion. The first Lord Bishop of Honolulu (Staley) also got an occasional sting from Mark's penpoint, for it was His Lordship's kindly way to tell how vastly the natives had deteriorated since the American missionaries came and it was Mark's patriotic privilege to call him to account.

The Sacramento letters show that, on the whole, the young correspondent quite caught the commercial spirit of Honolulu and predicted great things of the place though he confessed to a doubt that the projected trans-Pacific leviathan, the 5000 ton Ajax, could enter the port.

The book of the eighties still contains some autographic treasures, the names of Avellan and Alexieff among the rest. These now noted men were naval captains then of the warships Africa and Vestnik. Crown Prince Oscar of Sweden and Norway is registered in a modest way, his name looking insignificant beside the sprawling entry of "Colonel Curtis Piehu Iaukea, His Majesty's Personal Aide-de-Camp, in Attendance upon his Royal Highness, Prince Oscar of Sweden and Norway."

On this page is the Russian entry in the record book, as reproduced by the Advertiser's art staff.

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MARK TWAIN'S TRIBUTE.

And here is the text of Mark Twain's entry, the title being his Strange Dream:

All day long I have sat apart and pondered over the mysterious occurrences of last night. There is no link lacking in the chain of incidents—my memory presents each in its proper order with perfect distinctness, but still—However, never mind these reflections; I will drop them and proceed to make a simple statement of the facts.

Towards eleven o'clock it was suggested that the character of the night was peculiarly suited to viewing the mightiest active volcano on the earth's surface in its most impressive sublimity. There was no light of moon or star in the inky heavens to mar the effect of the crater's gorgeous pyrotechnics.

In due time I stood with my companion on the wall of the cauldron which the natives, ages ago, named Halemaumau, the abyss wherein they were wont to throw the remains of their chiefs to the end that no vulgar feet might ever tread above them.

We stood there, at dead of night, a mile above the level of the sea and looked down a thousand feet upon a boiling, surging, roaring ocean of fire; shaded our eyes from the blinding glare and gazed far away over the crimson waves with a vague notion that a supernatural fleet, manned by demons and freighted by the damned, might presently sail up out of the remote distance, started when tremendous thunder-bursts shook the earth and followed with fascinated eyes the grand jets of molten lava that sprang high up toward the zenith and exploded in a world of fiery spray that lit up the somber heavens with an infernal splendor.

"What is your little bonfire of Vesuvius to this?"

My ejaculation roused my companion from his reverie and we fell into a conversation appropriate to the occasion and the surroundings. "We came at last to speak of the ancient custom of casting the bodies of dead chieftains into this fearful caldron, and my companion, who is of the blood royal, mentioned that the founder of his race, old King Kamehameha the First, that invincible old pagan Alexander—had found other sepulture than the burning depths of the Halaemaumau."

I grew interested at once. I knew that the mystery of what became of the corpse of the Warrior King had never been fathomed. I was aware that there was a legend connected with this matter and I felt as if there could be no more fitting time to listen to it than the present. The descendant of the Kamehameha said:

"The dead King was brought in royal state down the long, winding road that descends from the rim of the crater to the scorched and chasm-riven plain that lies between the Halemaumau and those butting walls yonder in the distance. The guards were set and the troops of mourners began the wierd wail for the departed. In the middle of the night came the sound of innumerable voices in the air and the rush of invisible wings, the funeral torches wavered, burned blue and went out!

"The mourners and watchers fell to the ground paralyzed with fear and many minutes elapsed before any one dared to move or speak for they believed that the phantom messengers of the dread Goddess of Fire had been in their midst.

"When at last the torch was lighted the bier was vacant—the dead monarch had been spirited away! Consternation seized upon all and they fled out of the crater! When the day dawned the multitude returned and began the search for the corpse. But not a footprint, not a sign was ever found. Day after day the search was continued and every cave in the great walls and every chasm in the plain for miles around was examined but to no purpose; and from that day to this the resting place of the lion King's bones is an unsolved mystery. But years afterwards when the grim prophetess, Waiahowakamaka lay on her deathbed the Goddess Pele appeared to her in a vision and told her that eventually the secret would be revealed and in a remarkable manner but not until the great Kauhuhu, the Shark God, should desert the sacred cavern Ana Puhi, in the island of Molokai and the waters of the sea should no more enter it and its floors should become dry.

"Ever since that time the simple, confiding natives have watched for the sign. And now after many and many a summer has come and gone and they who were in the flower of youth then have waxed old and died, the day is at hand! The great Shark God has deserted the Ana Puhi. A month ago, for the first time within the records of the ancient legends the sea has ceased to flow into the cavern and its stony pavement has become dry. As you may easily believe, the news of this great event spread like wild fire through the islands and now the natives are looking every hour for the miracle which is to unveil the mystery and reveal the secret grave of the dead hero."

After I had gone to bed, I got to thinking of the volanic magnificence we had witnessed and could not get to sleep. I hunted up a book and concluded I would pass the time in reading. The first chapter I came upon related several instances of remarkable revelations made to men through the agency of dreams, of roads and houses, trees, fences and all manner of landmarks shown in visions and recognized afterward in waking and which served to point the way to some dark mys-

KOA FOREST NEAR VOLCANO HOUSE.